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PROTECTION OF GLOBAL CLIMATE FOR PRESENT AND FUTURE GENERATIONS OF MANKIND

Report of the Secretary-General

I. OBJECTIVE

1. By its resolution 45/212 of 21 December 1990, the General Assembly established a single negotiating process to prepare an effective framework convention on climate change, containing appropriate commitments, and any related legal instruments as might be agreed upon. It entrusted that task to an Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, setting it the objective of completing the framework convention prior to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development to be held at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 1 to 12 June 1992, so that the convention might be opened for signature during that Conference.

II. ORGANIZATION OF WORK

2. At its first session, the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee elected its officers, adopted rules of procedure, set guidelines for the negotiations and established two working groups to draft elements of the framework convention, one dealing with commitments, the other with mechanisms. The terms of reference of the two working groups, related procedural points and the role of the plenary Committee in integrating their work are set out in the annex to decision 1/1 of the Committee (see A/AC.237/6 and Corr.1).

3. The working groups started to function at the second session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, when their officers were elected. At the end of the second and third sessions, the officers of each working group were mandated to prepare texts aimed at facilitating and focusing the work of the subsequent session.

III. CALENDAR

4. The Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee has held three sessions since its establishment and scheduled a fourth, as follows:

(a) At Chantilly, near Washington, D.C., from 4 to 14 February 1991, at the invitation of the authorities of the host country;

(b) At the United Nations Office at Geneva, from 19 to 28 June 1991;

(c) At the United Nations Office at Nairobi, from 9 to 20 September 1991;

(d) At the United Nations Office at Geneva, from 9 to 20 December 1991.

5. At its third session, the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee considered possible dates and venues for its work in 1992 and recommended to the General Assembly that a fifth session be held at United Nations Headquarters in New York from 18 to 28 February 1992, with the possibility of a resumed session for a few days in April 1992. The completion of the framework convention by mid-April would enable it to be made ready for signature during the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. The Assembly may wish to accept that recommendation and provide for the required meetings of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee in 1992.

IV. PARTICIPATION

6. The Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee is open to all States Members of the United Nations or members of the specialized agencies. The number of participating States has been high, ranging around 120 at the second and third sessions, of which over 90 were developing countries. The great majority of delegations included representatives from capitals.

7. Observers, including intergovernmental organizations, have participated in the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee in accordance with the established practice of the General Assembly. The executive heads of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), as well as representatives of United Nations programmes and specialized agencies, have also participated in the work of the Committee and made substantive contributions. Relevant non-governmental organizations have attended the session of the Committee, bringing to bear a range of environmental, developmental and business interests.

8. Many participating States, particularly developing countries, have been constrained in their ability to field delegations capable of covering the breadth of issues arising in the negotiations. Several delegations have consisted of one person and have thus been unable to cover both working groups continuously. It is important that as many States as possible should participate actively and effectively in fashioning the framework convention,

in full cognizance of the important issues and interests at stake. In certain cases, this may require an increase in the priority and the resources allocated to participation in the Committee.

V. FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR THE PARTICIPATION OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

9. The participation of developing countries has been supported by the special voluntary fund established under paragraph 10 of resolution 45/212. Contributions pledged to this fund by Governments and by a regional economic integration organization are of the order of $US 1.5 million, most of which has been paid in. Additional finance for participation of developing countries in the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee has been or will be made available by Governments bilaterally, by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and WMO.

10. Arrangements made by the secretariat of the Committee for the use of the special voluntary fund, with the support of UNDP field offices, have enabled it to offer some 100 developing countries funding for travel and subsistence costs for one delegate each per session. It has also organized pre-session training seminars open to interested delegates from those countries, with collaboration from the secretariat of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

11. The list of countries offered access to the fund is derived from a criterion of GDP per capita ($US 1,800 or less in 1988). It includes all the least developed countries and most small island developing countries. In addition, financial assistance has been offered to countries not in the list that provide officers to the Committee and its working groups, as well as to a regional organization. These arrangements were instituted for the second session of the Committee, endorsed by that session and maintained for the third and fourth sessions. Some 80 delegations made use of the financial support available for each of the second and third sessions. It is hoped that that figure will be exceeded at the fourth session.

12. The balance in the special voluntary fund is insufficient to cover the estimated costs of supporting participation in the fifth session of the Committee. Additional funding needed for this purpose is of the order of $US 200,000. It is essential that this become available in the near future so as to permit timely arrangements to be made for the session in February 1992. A further $US 300,000 would be needed to cover a brief resumption of the fifth session in April 1992.

VI. PROGRESS OF WORK IN THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL NEGOTIATING COMMITTEE

13. The reports of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on its first three sessions are contained in documents A/AC.237/6 and Corr.1, A/AC.237/9 and 12. The first session dealt with the organization of the negotiating

process, as indicated in paragraph 2 above. The second session undertook a first reading of a large number of papers and proposals submitted by participating States, including some complete draft conventions. Consideration of these and further submissions by States, as well as of working papers prepared by officers of the two working groups, continued at the third session. The division of subject-matter between the two working groups corresponds to their terms of reference in decision 1/1 of the Committee, with elements relating to the preamble and principles being taken up in Working Group I.

14. The state of play in the two working groups at the end of the second and third sessions was summed up in the oral reports presented to the Committee in plenary by their respective Co-Chairmen. Those oral reports, presenting the impressions of the Co-Chairmen on convergences and divergences of views expressed in the working groups, are summarized in the reports of the Committee (A/AC.237/9, paras. 44-65, and A/AC.237/12, paras. 74-98).

15. The provisional agenda for the fourth session of the Committee envisages work by the plenary Committee on integration and completion of draft texts submitted by the working groups.

VII. RELATIONS WITH THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL PANEL ON CLIMATE CHANGE

16. The work of the UNEP/WMO Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has been proceeding in parallel with that of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee. It includes areas of study in the short term, including methodological questions, relating to needs likely to arise in the negotiation and implementation of a framework convention on climate change. It is expected to produce in 1992 an update of its First Assessment Report (1990).

17. Items relating to the work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change were considered by the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee at its first and second sessions; a similar item is on the provisional agenda for the fourth session; and the Chairman of the Panel has addressed each session of the Committee. Participants in the Committee are thus aware of the results of current activities of the Panel and its working groups. The secretariat of the Committee has also ensured that the Panel is informed of the progress of work on the framework convention. The Committee has not addressed any requests to the Panel for scientific and technical advice.

VIII. SECRETARIAT ARRANGEMENTS AND THEIR FUNDING

18. The secretariat of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, in collaboration with United Nations departments, programmes and specialized agencies, provides substantive support to the negotiating process; facilitates participation therein, particularly by developing countries; manages the funds established under General Assembly resolution 45/212, under the authority of

the Secretary-General; and promotes public awareness of the process through communication with information media and non-governmental organizations.

19. The secretariat of the Committee is provided by the United Nations, with the support of UNEP and WMO. The Secretary-General has assigned a United Nations staff member to head it as Executive Secretary. Some of its staff have been made available by UNEP and WMO, as also - on a temporary basis - by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). Additional staff have been obtained under bilateral arrangements with Governments of member States. The technical secretariat of the Committee is provided at each session by staff from the Office of Political and General Assembly Affairs and Secretariat Services. The UNCTAD secretariat is providing administrative services to the Committee secretariat, pending definitive arrangements. The secretariat of the Committee has been allocated offices by the United Nations Office at Geneva. Other secretariat requirements in 1991 have been met through financial arrangements with the UNCTAD secretariat.

20. These secretariat arrangements are in accordance with the relevant provisions of General Assembly resolution 45/212 and with the undertaking to provide secretariat support to the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee without additional appropriations from the programme budget for the biennium ending 31 December 1991.

21. The trust fund for the negotiating process, established under paragraph 20 of resolution 45/212, will be used to defray secretariat expenses other than staff costs. Expected contributions to the fund now total approximately $US 180,000.

22. The Secretary-General will, in due course, make proposals for funding the staff and other costs of the secretariat of the Committee, as well as other expenses related to the negotiating process.